Party & Sect in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories

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MACHIAVELLI'S FLORENTINE HISTORIES resembles a history book of our day in having a period of narration and in presenting a problem. After the Epistle Dedicatory to Pope Clement VII, who had commissioned the work, Machiavelli states the problem in the Proemium. Despite his commission, he calls the *Florentine Histories* "my undertaking"; and "my purpose," he says, was to write on "the things done inside and outside by the Florentine people," especially on the former, "the causes of the hatreds and divisions in the city." If any republic has notable divisions, those of Florence are "very notable." Most republics have had one division between the nobles and the plebs, as Rome or Athens, but Florence has suffered from many divisions dividing the winning party which have produced "as many deaths,

as many exiles, as many ruined families as ever appeared in any city of which we have record."[1]

Machiavelli's undertaking, then, is to seek the causes of the divisions in Florence as contrasted to those in Rome or Athens. Yet in the rest of the work we are given only two explicit statements on the causes. In the first chapter of the third book Machiavelli says that whereas the Roman people desired to share supreme honors together with the nobles, the Florentine people fought to govern themselves without participation by the nobles. The refusal of the Florentine people to share supreme honors with the nobles is puzzling, however, because Machiavelli began the chapter with the remark that popular men do not wish to obey and the implication that they do not wish to rule. What makes the Florentine people thirst for partisan victory?

In the first chapter of the seventh book, Machiavelli gives his only explicit characterization of the Florentine parties. Some divisions, he says, are harmful to republics; others are beneficial. Harmful ones are "accompanied by sects and partisans," while beneficial ones are not. The founder of a republic cannot prevent enmities; he can provide that there not be sects. The enmities of Florence were always sects or "mixed with sects." But what are sects? Nowhere in the *Florentine Histories* does Machiavelli define "sect." He uses the word in several meanings, but always in connection with religion; and the religion of Florence was Christianity.[2] We

1. *Florentine Histories,* F. Flora and C. Cordié, eds., in *Tutte le Opere di Niccolò Machiavelli,* 2 vols. (Milan, 1949–50), hereafter cited as *F. H.* Machiavelli's *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* will be cited as *Disc., The Prince* as *P.,* and numbers in parentheses will refer to this edition.

2. This is true even of the "two sects of armies" in 5:2 (Vol. 2., p. 221); see note 47. The word "sect" occurs thirty-five times in the *Florentine Histories* in fourteen different locations; the seventh location is 3:7, and the word occurs in a sequence of seven chapters, 3:3–9. The only book whose first chapter contains "sect" is the seventh. In *The Prince* and the *Discourses* taken together, "sect" occurs twenty-one times, in seven locations in the *Discourses,* first in the seventh chapter where it refers to the "sects" of Savonarola and of his opponents, and seven

are led to the suggestion, which this study will develop, that Christianity is responsible for the special character of the parties in Florence.

Christianity, with its otherworldly understanding of "supreme honors," and its consequent superpolitical claims and transpolitical organization, is a sect essentially different from the ancient sects. It could not be managed or controlled by the Florentine princes in the way that the Roman Senate was able to manage the more political sects of pagan priests. The Christian sect (in the sense of "religion") became the context of the modern sects (in the sense of "parties"), and determined the play of modern politics by deprecating its prizes. In a work commissioned by and dedicated to a Florentine Pope, Machiavelli does not make this point directly. No man acquainted with politics would expect otherwise, and since the publication of that fundamental work of Machiavelli scholarship, Leo Strauss's *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* scholars have begun to explore Machiavelli's methods of indirect statement. In the *Florentine Histories* he makes his point indirectly both in the form of the work (sections 1–4 of this study) and in the content of his narrations (sections 5–9). To begin with the form of the book, one must consider its period of narration.

THE MEANING OF 1434

In the Epistle Dedicatory Machiavelli excuses himself for the things he will say against the Medici by pretending that, contrary to the instructions of the Pope (formerly

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times in the body of one chapter, 2:5. It does not occur in *Disc.* 1:26, as one might expect from 2:5. When "sect" means "party," it is never used to refer specifically to the ancient parties, and in the *Florentine Histories* Machiavelli uses the expression "Guelf sect" but never "Ghibelline sect"; cf. *P.* 20. It is some indication of the difference between the *Florentine Histories* and the *Discourses* that in the former he speaks of Catholic or heretical sects within Christianity, since the context is Christian, and in the latter of the "Christian sect" as opposed to the "Gentile sect."

Giulio de' Medici), he may have seemed to flatter them. Thus he forestalls the charge of hostility by denying the charge of flattery, and in the Proemium he says that it was "my purpose" to begin "my narrative" at 1434, when the Medici had become the most powerful family in Florence, because "two most excellent historians" had told of the things that happened before that time. But on examination, their works proved inadequate on "the civil discords and internal enmities" and indeed, because of the importance of these matters, altogether defective.[3] This is the kind of examination that ambitious young princes of scholarship apply to the established authorities, and it might seem that Machiavelli was merely enlarging a gap in the scholarly literature to make a place for himself as a narrative historian. The *Florentine Histories* is often translated *The History of Florence* as if this were his intention, whatever his success in it.

The *Florentine Histories* is the only work of narration that Machiavelli wrote, but its resemblance to a modern history book is merely superficial. He speaks of "my narrative," "my narratives," and "our narrative"; once when he inter-

3. Neither of these two historians, Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini, in fact ended his history at 1434. They did not adequately discuss civil discords in the past, Machiavelli says, because they feared to offend the living; but their fear was unnecessary. They did not consider that "actions that have greatness in them, as have those of governments and states, however carried on, and whatever outcome they have, always appear to bring men more honor than blame." *F. H.* Proemium (vol. 2, p. 7). In cruder words, these writers overestimated the power of morality in determining reputation, and their inadequacy is the result of a deep and general mistake. This mistake is indicated in Bruni's assertion that the Florentine people is a free people "not conquered in wars outside but oppressed by internal and civil discords." Bruni does not appreciate the connection between inside and outside things, *Historiarum Florentini Populi, Libri XII,* "Rerum Italicarum Scriptores," E. Santini ed., vol. 19, Part 3, p. 22; E. Santini, "Leonardo Bruni Aretino e i suoi *Historiarum Florentini Populi Libri XII,*" *Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa,* vol. 22 (1910), pp. 121–22. See note 71. Cf. the writers discussed in *Disc.* 1:4 who "condemn the tumults between the Nobles and the Plebs," (vol. 1, p. 104).

rupts the narrative briefly he speaks of returning to "our order." But he also speaks of "our history" [*la istoria nostra*], of "my history," which he determined to begin at the beginning of "our city," and of "all parts of my history," which include "speeches and private reasonings, direct as well as oblique." [4] The "history" is not identical with the "narrative"; it determines where the narrative begins and contains invented speeches and reasonings that mere narrative would not include.

Moreover, the "history" has parts; as we know from the title of the work, it is divided into "histories." The obvious divisions are the eight books, of which seven begin with a discussion of some general political topic in the first chapter, in five cases an explicit comparison of ancient and modern practice. Perhaps it would be better to understand these "histories" as in the classical sense "inquiries." [5] The master inquiry, stated in the Proemium, would be "to show the causes of the hatreds and divisions" in Florence as opposed to Rome or Athens, and the seven following inquiries would serve this end. The master inquiry is not an historical problem in the current meaning, since its end is not to characterize the "history" of Florence but to use narratives of events in Florence to characterize certain parties and sects. It does not assume, as historians do today, that "history" is a thing to be studied or an aspect of reality as well as a certain kind of study. Correspondingly, the seven inquiries do not each introduce an historical period whose course of events illustrates some general human propensity in favor or in demand at that time, like the periods that make chapters in our his-

4. *F. H.* Epistle Dedicatory, Proemium, 1:10 (Vol. 2, p. 21). Of thirty-four quoted speeches in the *Florentine Histories* twelve are introduced with the formula *in questa sentenza* and one, in 3:11, of which Machiavelli says the words are true, with *in questa forma.* There are also seventeen indirect speeches.

5. Herodotus, 1.1; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1360a37; Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b3; Polybius, 1.1.4; Cicero, *De Oratore,* 2.12.52–14.58; Cicero, *De Legibus,* 1.2.5.

tory books. Machiavelli's inquiries (to which we shall return) overlap and do not seem to begin or end a course of events.

Most important, the narrative does not proceed without interruption or complication. It is constructed to and from 1434, the date of Cosimo de' Medici's return to Florence from exile, which was the coming to power of the Medici in Florence; and it is divided in four parts according to a distinction between things inside and things outside Florence. In giving the plan of the work in the Proemium, Machiavelli divides his task at 1434, before which he will, in view of the scholarly literature, discuss "particularly" things that happened inside the city and those outside things necessary to know the inside things. After this date, he will describe both the one and the other. Then he says that before dealing with Florence, he will show how Italy "came under the powers that governed it in that time"—a guarded expression suggesting the wide scope of things outside Florence. Machiavelli then gives an outline of the first four books; the first book describes "briefly" events in Italy to 1434 and the second to fourth books on Florence also close at 1434. From that time, he will present things happening inside and outside Florence "up to our present times." In fact, he tells first of things outside Florence to 1463 in Books 5 and 6, and then returns to 1434 at the beginning of Book 7 to catch up on things within Florence. From the seventh chapter of the seventh book, that is, from the death of Cosimo de' Medici, Machiavelli relates events inside and outside Florence together.

The reader thus expects 1434 to be a crucial year.[6] It seems

6. "1434" occurs eleven times in the *Florentine Histories,* and first appears as "the year of the Christian religion 1434." Proemium (Vol. 2, p. 5) To show the power of sects in establishing the narrative of events, Machiavelli begins forty-nine chapters with parts of the verb "to be," thirteen of them in Book 1. There are 107 dates in the work in

to be connected to the distinction between things inside and things outside Florence, for the narrative is told in such a way that the things outside Florence are brought ever closer to the things inside. In the first book, only events outside Florence to 1434 are narrated; in Books 2–4 (before 1434) only those outside events relevant to events inside Florence are narrated; from the beginning of Book 5 to Book 7: 6 (after 1434), outside events are assumed to be relevant to inside events but are narrated separately; and from 7:7 (1464) they are narrated together. 1434 divides exactly in half not only the eight books but the 286 chapters of the *Florentine Histories.*[7] The precise difference, as given, is this: before the coming to power of the Medici, it is necessary to distinguish between things outside Florence necessary to know the inside things and things outside unnecessary to know for that purpose; and afterwards it is no longer necessary to make this distinction. With the return of Cosimo, things outside Florence are automatically relevant to things inside, and this result is given emphasis by the change in narrative method used after the death of Cosimo.

The meaning of 1434, though not obvious, seems surely grand. But when we turn to Machiavelli's description of this event in the last chapter of the fourth book and the first chapter of the fifth, we find no discourse on "the meaning of 1434." Instead we find a trifling turn of fortune caused by impotence and foolish confidence.

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seventy-five locations; 35 dates are given with the formula "the year. . . ." In the *Discourses* there are 26 dates (all at least partly in Machiavelli's lifetime) in twenty-three chapters.

7. The first four and the last four books have eleven × thirteen chapters; the first book has three × thirteen chapters, and the last seven books, nineteen × thirteen chapters. Machiavelli's *The Prince* has twenty-six chapters; and his *Art of War* has 182 (thirteen × fourteen) speeches. The *Discourses* has 142 chapters, but this is the same as the number of books in Livy's *History.* It would have been praeternatural for Livy to have anticipated Machiavelli's need. Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1958), pp. 48–49, 52.

It appears at the end of Book 4 that the Medici did not first become prominent in 1434. In that year Cosimo de' Medici was restored from exile to Florence in triumph over the chief of the opposing party, Rinaldo degli Albizzi, himself now sent into exile. "Rarely has it happened that a citizen, returning in triumph from a victory, has been received by his fatherland with such a concourse of people and so great a demonstration of good will, as he received when he returned from exile." But how did he get the victory and what was the nature of the triumph?

Cosimo had been sent into exile by a party of "nobles" whose divided counsel had allowed him to bribe his way to this easy fate, leaving his own party strong in Florence.[8] When Cosimo's partisans captured the *Signoria* by the usual method of lot from elected or prearranged eligibles, Messer Rinaldo and his party were again divided and irresolute. Though aware of the danger, they could not decide to prevent the new *Signoria* from taking office. As soon as it showed its intention of restoring Cosimo, Messer Rinaldo took arms, but those of his party who had argued against precipitate action, as they called it, had no stomach for fighting an opponent who by their inactivity had won public authority. Messer Rinaldo upbraided them for their sluggishness, receiving a feeble excuse from one and muttered incoherence from another. He took the time to declare to them that if disaster followed he would have the satisfaction of having given advice of the danger and of having been present at it with force. But in fact, Machiavelli says, Messer Rinaldo had sufficient force to capture the *Signori,* and lost his opportunity by waiting for more. In the time he spent in upbraiding his friends, the *Signori* recovered their spirit, made preparations for their defense, and sent some citizens to Rinaldo to exhort him to lay down his arms, assuring him the *Signori*

8. This was a mistake of the nobles; see *Disc.* 1:33; *F. H.* 4:3, 27. Niccolò da Uzzano's foretelling, 4:19 (end), foretells Rinaldo's foretelling in 4:30 because it indicates the division of the Florentine nobility.

had no intention to restore Cosimo. One of Rinaldo's lieutenants accepted this assurance, and went with his followers into the palace of the *Signoria* to signify his acceptance. Rinaldo saw his own followers begin to lose their warmth of spirit.

At this point the Pope intervened. He was staying in Florence because he had been chased from Rome by the Roman people. "Seeing these tumults and believing it his office to quiet them," he sent for Rinaldo and persuaded him, with a guarantee of the good intentions of the *Signoria,* to disarm himself. Whereupon the *Signori* secretly arranged to seize the city's fortresses, and having done so, brought back Cosimo and exiled Rinaldo. Pope Eugene, seeing the ruin of those who "at his prayer" had laid down their arms, was "very ill content." He lamented the injury "done under his faith" and asked Rinaldo to have patience and to hope for the good "because of the variability of fortune." Rinaldo accepted these priestly condolences in the spirit with which they were offered: he blamed himself more than anyone else, he said, for putting too much faith in the Pope and for believing that "you who have been chased from your own fatherland, could keep me in mine." [9] He said that he had had much experience of the senselessness of fortune, and that if fortune did not show herself favorable to him, he did not desire anyhow to live in a city where the laws were less powerful than men. Rinaldo stalked out of Florence in high dudgeon, and Cosimo returned "in triumph." [10]

9. Just before Rinaldo died, he tried, Machiavelli says, "to gain his celestial fatherland, since he had lost his terrestrial"; *F. H.* 5:34 (Vol. 2, p. 271). His failure to see that one cannot have both—that all men are "exiles" from one or the other—was the source of his credulity. Cf. 4: 22 and 4:26 for Rinaldo's naïve request for protection against "false calumnies" and 5:8 for his naïve request for aid from the Duke of Milan.

10. Lorenzo was able to claim, in 1478 after the failure of the Pazzi conspiracy, that Cosimo returned from exile "not with arms and violence, but with your consent and union." *F. H.* 8:10 (Vol. 2, p. 394). For another ludicrous triumph, see 8: 23.

Machiavelli's *Florentine Histories* thus turns on what may be called the comedy of 1434. The contrast of Cosimo's triumph with a Roman triumph is humiliating for Italy, Florence, and Cosimo himself. Cosimo's triumph established the hegemony of the Medici family, but a Roman triumph brought glory to the individual and acquisitions to the republic. A Roman triumph could not occur in Florence because the Florentine nobility, disunited and weak, was unable to manage Cosimo; it thought only of exile or death for him and could not find a task that would attach his interest and glory to the common good.[11] In the end Cosimo was permitted to back his way into power in a kind of "restoration." [12] He did not have to gain power with his own arms.

Cosimo's triumph, therefore, was "Roman" in the modern rather than the ancient sense. It was accomplished partly by "the authority of the Pope," [13] who at the time was staying in Florence and who thereafter was united with Florence as members of the Medici family became Popes. In submitting the *Florentine Histories* to a Medici Pope Machiavelli asserted that Florence remained divided "until it began to be governed under the protection of Your House [*Casa Sua*]." "Your House" contains the ambiguous reference to both the Medici and the papacy that is needed to confirm the "Ro-

11. *F. H.* 4:27. Niccolò da Uzzano, a noble who opposed the use of "extraordinary ways" against Cosimo, gives a discourse, accurate in its view of future events, that perfectly exposes the impotence of morality in its "ordinary ways." His discourse concludes in a prayer and with the advice to "live neutrally," as if men in need of God's help could forget the cause of their need, their natural partisanship and self-interestedness.

12. Cosimo's party ordained, after he was restored, that others could be restored only by a vote of thirty-four in a college of thirty-seven, which would be a nearly miraculous margin of assent. For the meaning of Cosimo's "restoration," see *F. H.* 7:5–6 (Vol. 2, pp. 336, 340), where Machiavelli's "extraordinary" method of praising Cosimo is perhaps more effective for being seen once, and not always. Cf. *Disc.* 1:52; *P.* 7 (Vol. 1, pp. 26–27); Machiavelli's letter of 30 August 1524.

13. *F. H.* 4:31 (Vol. 2, p. 216).

man" triumph of Cosimo.[14] We may wonder what made that triumph possible. What cause but the character of the Christian sect makes possible the authority of the Pope and establishes his "office" as a regent above human politics and as intermediary and peacemaker between human parties? We shall find a similar explanation for the obvious fact that the Medici house was made more prominent by its ecclesiastical attainments. A private house like the Medici was enabled to rise above public control because Christianity had weakened or destroyed the basis of public control.

THE "EXTRAORDINARY FORCE"

The account of Cosimo's triumph is immediately followed, at the beginning of Book 5, by a discussion of "nature" and man's place in nature. Machiavelli says that "nature does not allow worldly things [*mondane cose*] to remain fixed"; hence order is followed by disorder, and disorder by order, unless men are stifled by "an extraordinary force." This "extraordinary force" outside the working of "nature" and superior to the "worldly things" that move makes one think of the supernatural. Elsewhere in this work Machiavelli describes a whirlwind as driven by "superior forces, whether natural or supernatural"; thus an extraordinary force outside the natural would seem to be the supernatural. One recalls a statement in the eleventh chapter of the *Discourses* (ambiguously titled "Of the Religion of the Romans"):

14. In *F. H.* 8:36 (Vol. 1, p. 431) Machiavelli says that the cardinalate received by Giovanni de' Medici at age thirteen was "a ladder to enable his house to rise into heaven, as happened in time following." After his son Giovanni died, Cosimo said: "This is too great a house for such a small family. . . ." Machiavelli almost omitted this "necessary" saying of Cosimo's; 7:6 (Vol. 2, pp. 338–39). Lorenzo, speaking to the *Signori* and certain citizens, said "our house . . . has always been exalted [*esaltata*] by you"; 8:10 (Vol. 2, p. 393); see the untruth in note 10 above. Cosimo in his magnificence built churches and private houses for his family, but no public buildings, 7:4–5.

"And truly there has been no orderer of extraordinary laws in a people who did not have recourse to God, for otherwise they would not be accepted." [15] Perhaps the "extraordinary force" that keeps modern men in disorder results from having recourse to the Christian God. If we suppose rightly, this is the only chapter in the *Florentine Histories* that considers the contrast of the natural and the supernatural, though without mentioning the supernatural. The chapter on the whirlwind (6: 34), which mentions the natural and the supernatural, does not contrast them. Machiavelli makes one point at a time, in its place.

This chapter (5:1) is also the only one in which the Tuscans, as distinguished from the inhabitants of the region of Tuscany, are mentioned.[16] The Tuscany of the Tuscans (or, as we would call them, the Etruscans) is pre-Roman Italy, hence not only pre-Christian Italy, but considering that ancient Rome is partly continuous with modern Rome, pre-pre-Christian Italy. It recalls the context of "nature" in which the Christian sect is only one among many sects. Machiavelli does not say what the "extraordinary force" could be that has prevented the return of virtue and order out of the ruins of the Roman empire. He merely wonders at the ease with which "weak and poorly administered armies" have held in check "so many very noble peoples." He remarks that since philosophers corrupt "the strength of armed spirits" with honorable laziness, Cato introduced a law that "no philosopher be received at Rome." [17] What is the laziness, hon-

15. *Disc.* 1:11 (Vol. 1, p. 126); *F. H.* 5:1, 6:34; cf. 3:16 (Vol. 2, p. 190). See "external force" in *Disc.* 3:1 (Vol. 1, p. 331). "Extraordinary" means "supernatural" in *P.* 26 (Vol. 1, p. 82).

16. One would expect them to be mentioned in *F. H.* 2:2.

17. *F. H.* 5:1 (Vol. 2, pp. 220–21). This consideration could never apply against Machiavelli himself, who teaches men to use or seize their own arms. Perhaps it takes an "extraordinary force" from this philosopher-captain to overcome the customary oscillation of virtue between quiet and glory and to rescue a people kept in ruin by means of another "extraordinary force."

orable or pious, that prevails in modern Rome? If it arises from an "extraordinary force," can it be controlled by political authority? These high thoughts on order and disorder in nature follow a domestic comedy in Florence and introduce a criticism of the conduct of modern "princes, soldiers, and chiefs of republics" in warfare.

We have, then, a transition from domestic to foreign affairs at the beginning of Book 5, as accords with Machiavelli's plan. The foreign policy of Florence becomes necessarily relevant to its domestic policy after the Medici achieve power in Florence through the agency of the Pope, who could not manage his own domestic troubles and yet thought himself qualified to pacify Florence. Because he does not recognize the distinction between domestic and foreign, he meddles where he can in the domestic affairs of princes and republics.

Thus the meaning of "foreign" is also ambiguous. It refers to the external relations of men with men and of men with God. The ambiguity is implied in Christian doctrine, which says that men live as friends with one another in peace, as they live at peace with God: the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. Machiavelli might have supposed from this that man's distance from God, which he thought too great for gratitude or filial piety on the part of man to God, makes God a foreigner to man,[18] and is ultimately responsible for the distances between human societies and hence for the distinction men make, in "ordinary" usage, between domestic and foreign affairs.

Christianity is the context of the *Florentine Histories,* since Florence, as Machiavelli shows in Book 1, was from

18. Even Cosimo, who spent continually for the building of temples and in charity was never able "to spend as much for the honor of God as was said to be due him in his books." *F. H.* 7:6 (Vol. 2, p. 337). For the connection between magnificence and religion, see Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics,* 1122b20. Florence is a city of beautiful buildings partly because Christianity turned its princes from magnanimity to magnificence.

its beginnings a Christian state. Christianity is not the open theme of the work, however. As compared to the *Discourses,*[19] Machiavelli says little in the *Florentine Histories* about Christianity. Although he states the problem of the work in a comparison of ancient and modern politics, he never describes Christianity, as he did in the *Discourses,* as the decisive difference between ancient and modern politics. The only book without an inquiry, the first, is the book that discusses Christianity, and it does this only by describing the activities of Christians and Popes. Machiavelli remarks here that men are now Pieros, Giovannis, and Matteos instead of Caesars and Pompeys, and he gives some idea of the effect of "the Christian religion" by discussing the effects of its heretical (as opposed to its catholic) sects.[20] The reader is left to surmise the meaning of "catholic sects" just as he was forced to discover the meaning of 1434.

In a book on his own city, commissioned by a Florentine Pope, Machiavelli could not speak as boldly about Christianity as he did in *The Prince* and the *Discourses;* and he does not claim for this work, as he did for those, that it contains everything he knows. But he constructed it with a division in the middle suggesting a thought that points directly at the Pope in Florence and indirectly at a Medici, i.e., Florentine Pope. Machiavelli's rhetoric more than his historical accuracy is at issue here. But which is his historical argument? Did Cosimo capture Florence and then did the Medici capture the papacy for Florence, or by capturing Florence did he and Florence become unconscious tools of the Pope, or was neither of these the case?

Cosimo was a "disarmed man," and he proved unable to expand "Florentine power with an honorable conquest." To

19. *Disc.* 1 pref., 12; 2:2, 5.

20. *F. H.* 1:5 (Vol. 2, p. 16); in 2:2 the first book is called "our universal treatise" to indicate that Christianity, not nature, is the context of the *Florentine Histories.* See Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* p. 307, n. 22.

capture Lucca, he had put his faith in the "mercenary and faithless arms" of Francesco Sforza. He had great authority in Florence, but it was left to his "descendants" to acquire authority in all Christendom. Yet if his "descendants" include the Medici Popes, they too were forced to depend on faithless mercenaries. It seems that under Christianity it is difficult for a prince to acquire anything, whether he is a "secular prince" or a Pope.[21] Because Christianity is above politics, the prince must be disarmed either of this world's weapons, like a Pope, or of the other world's weapons, like a mercenary captain. Cosimo seems to represent the modern prince whose "greatness of spirit" is reduced to private "magnificence," whose ambition is restricted to peacemaking in his own city, and whose authority is dissipated in the ecclesiastical attainments of his "descendants." At his triumph in 1434 and again at his death Machiavelli quotes the epitaph on Cosimo's tombstone, *padre della patria.* Since both *"padre"* and *patria* are ambiguous, this is both a lower and a higher designation in the sacred, as compared to the secular, hierarchy.[22]

THE ABSENCE OF SAVONAROLA

The importance of Christianity is openly slighted and covertly emphasized. In view of this rhetorical tactic, it is significant that Machiavelli fails even to mention Savonarola in the *Florentine Histories.* He says in the Proemium that he will describe things inside and outside Florence "up to our present times," but he ends Book 8 at the death of Lorenzo

21. *F. H.* 1:23 (Vol. 2, p. 40); 7:5 (Vol. 2, p. 335); 7:6 (Vol. 2, pp. 338–39); 6:20 (Vol. 2, p. 300); 8:11 (Vol. 2, p. 396); 8:17 (Vol. 2, p. 404).

22. *F. H.* 4:33 (Vol. 2, p. 218) and 7:6 (Vol. 2, p. 339). Of numerological interest are the facts that these two chapters are separated by seventy-eight chapters, when the two chapters out of narrative order are removed, 5:2–3; that Cosimo is first mentioned in 4:11; and that he succeeds his father in 4:16. See note 9. On Lorenzo, see 8:36.

in 1492. Lorenzo, he says ominously, was mourned with just cause, for after his death those who were left found no way to satisfy or check the ambition of Lodovico Sforza, a situation "which began the growth of those evil seeds that, in a short time, since no living man knew how to destroy them, have ruined and still ruin Italy."[23] Thus Machiavelli quickly shifts his gaze from Florence to Italy, overlooking the then-imminent rule of Savonarola, whom Lorenzo had already invited to Florence. Since he apparently does not keep his promise to carry the narrative "up to our present times," it is easy to conclude that the *Florentine Histories* is unfinished. Yet the arrangement of chapters indicates that it is not simply unfinished.[24] Machiavelli submitted it as finished and surely polished his first draft.

In the Epistle Dedicatory he offers an apology for not writing up to the present: "And since in writing I have come to those times which by the death of the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici have changed the form of Italy, and since the things which followed this have been loftier and greater, and are to be described with a loftier and greater spirit [*spirito*], I have judged it well that all I have described up to this time be assembled in one volume and presented to Your Most Blessed Holiness, so that in some part you may begin to taste the fruits of your seeds and my labors."[25] It is as if a second volume were promised that would contain a full description of everything "loftier and greater" than the contents of the first volume. Yet the first volume is a fruit that may have a taste of the second volume, and it seems to end in a way that suggests the loftier and greater things of which Machiavelli could not speak explicitly.

Machiavelli had said in the *Discourses* (in the eleventh

23. *F. H.* 8:36 (Vol. 2, p. 434).
24. See notes 2, 6, 7.
25. *F. H.* Epistle Dedicatory (Vol. 2, p. 3); cf. 5:1; 8:9, 29. Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Niccolò Machiavelli* (Rome, 1954), pp. 298–9, 309–10, 466, n. 17.

chapter, discussed above) that one must speak of "so great a man" as Savonarola "with reverence," but he did not hesitate to display "his life, doctrine and the plan he undertook" as an example to confirm the feasibility of bringing new orders even to civilized men, such as the people of Florence supposed themselves to be.[26] Surely a *Florentine Histories* completed "up to our present times" would describe the new order of Savonarola, unless we are to impute reverence to Savonarola in Machiavelli's mention of the "loftier and greater" things to come after Lorenzo. At the end of Book 8, he speaks only of the calamities to come after Lorenzo, the evil seeds whose growth would begin, in the absence of Lorenzo, through the ambition of Lodovico Sforza.[27] This passage must refer to the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII, King of France, in 1494. Now these calamities were signified, Machiavelli says in the same place, by a bolt of lightning that struck the cathedral of Santa Reparata.[28] In the *Discourses,* however, in the chapter devoted to signs (1:56), he mentions this event as occurring before the death of Lorenzo (1492) but without saying what it signified and with the prosaic remark that it caused "very great damage to that building." He must have known Savonarola's interpretation of the event, also as a sign of calamities, but of domestic calamities in Florence. They were the scourge of God—*Ecce gladius Domini*—to punish the Florentines for their sins.[29] Just before he mentions this event without its interpretation, he tells "how much was predicted by Brother Girolamo Savonarola before the coming of King Charles VIII of

26. *Disc.* 1:11 (Vol. 1, p. 128).

27. *Disc.* 2:15, 3:11; *P.* 3.

28. *F. H.* 8:36 (Vol. 2, p. 434); 5:15; 8:5,6; letter of 9 March 1498.

29. *Disc.* 1:56 (Vol. 1, p. 215). Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Girolamo Savonarola,* 2 vols. (Rome, 1952), pp. 73–74. Another sign of impending calamities was that the princes *through their spokesmen* [*oratori*] declared their sorrow to Florence at Lorenzo's death; *F. H.* 8:36. Spokesmen of princes are like interpreters of signs. Cf. *F. H.* 7:28 for Machiavelli's prose version of a sign.

France into Italy. . . ." So in the *Florentine Histories* he uses the wrong sign of the two available, the one referring to domestic calamities rather than foreign invasion; and he omits any connection with Savonarola by failing to mention either his name or the domestic changes in Florence that would put him in mind immediately.[30] Machiavelli leaves a false trail that points away from Savonarola and therefore, after the proper "inquiries," leads back to him.

We are at first confused by the fact that the *Florentine Histories* ends with the foreboding of a foreign invasion, when we expect, in a work whose theme is internal divisions, the foreboding if not the discussion of a striking change of government in Florence. But in the refined meaning of "foreign," the coming of Savonarola rather than the King of France constitutes a foreign invasion. In 5:1, Machiavelli says that by the cowardly wars in Italy, "as will be made clearly known by what we shall describe from 1434 to 1494," a new road was opened to the barbarians and Italy put herself back into slavery under them. But Savonarola, in 1494, hailed the coming of the French king as the purgation of Florence and the Church. In consequence of the invasion, the Medici were expelled from Florence and Savonarola seized the opportunity of bringing new orders to men who thought they were civilized. Truth is stranger than fiction, and Machiavelli did not have to make the metaphor of "foreign" that he could find in events.

THE INQUIRIES

To understand the *Florentine Histories* one must make the importance of Christianity explicit. To do this for 1434, the crucial event of the work, it was necessary to consider the inquiry on order and disorder at the beginning of Book 5 as a transition rather than an introduction. At the beginning

30. He does mention Lorenzo's patronage of a rival of Savonarola's; Machiavelli, *Istorie Fiorentine* ed. F. Gaeta (Milan, 1962), p. 575, n. 14.

of Book 8, Machiavelli says that it would seem proper, "wishing to follow our custom," to speak of "the quality of conspiracies and their importance" between the narrations of two actual conspiracies. This he would do, he says, if he had not done so in another place or if he could do so with brevity.[31] So these things will be put aside, and he will turn to "another matter"; the seventh inquiry, it seems, will be omitted. But in fact it is not omitted. Machiavelli does speak of "the quality of conspiracies and their importance," and in such manner as to suggest the quality and importance of his "inquiries."

Passing to the other matter, he says that after "the state of the Medici" had overcome all the hostilities of those who opposed it openly, it had to overcome those who schemed against it secretly.[32] Such conspiracies succeed with difficulty, for they usually bring ruin to "those who move them" and greatness to the man conspired against. Unless the latter is killed, which rarely happens, he rises to greater power. Then he often becomes wicked, as these conspiracies by their example give him cause to fear; fear causes him to secure himself; securing himself causes him to injure; injuring gives birth to hatreds "and many times his own ruin." Thus, Machiavelli concludes, such conspiracies quickly crush "those who move them" and with time, harm "those against whom they are moved."

These remarks serve as a prelude to a fascinating narration of the Pazzi conspiracy against the Medici brothers Giuliano and Lorenzo. The conspiracy was executed inside Flor-

31. *F. H.* 8:1 (vol. 2, p. 379). See references to the preceding or following book in 1:39, 3:1, 3:29, 6:38, 7:1, 7:34. Machiavelli treats of conspiracy in *Disc.* 3:6 and *P.* 19, each the longest chapter in the work.

32. *Occultamente* and *secretamente* are used interchangeably (vol. 2, p. 379). Opposition to the Medici in Machiavelli's day would still have to be secret; Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* (Princeton, 1965), p. 239. See the letter of Donato Gianotti (written in 1533), quoted in Machiavelli, *The History of Florence,* ed. Myron P. Gilmore, (New York, 1970), pp. xxvi–vii.

ence and by a last-minute change of plan inside a church, and it failed because the executioners, lacking "a great and firm spirit [*animo*]," killed only Giuliano and not Lorenzo.[33] Lorenzo, rid of a brother who was bound to cause him trouble, did indeed rise to greater power in a city "that judges things by success and not by counsel." [34] Why, then, did Machiavelli make so much of the indirect consequences of conspiracy, since apparently they did not follow from the Pazzi conspiracy? His discussion hints that not every conspirator need "move" his conspiracy. It suggests the possibility of an indirect conspiracy which uses other conspirators to "move" the conspiracy and make the first—ordinarily unsuccessful—attempt. Then the patient master conspirator can watch the indirect consequences develop. In fact, there was a master conspirator behind the Pazzi conspiracy, the Pope—and he was foiled by the refusal of one executioner "to accompany treason with sacrilege." [35]

It would be prudent to suppose that Machiavelli considered himself a master conspirator who intended, however, not to be hoist on his own petard. He remarks mildly that this Pope was "the first who began to show how much a pope could do. . . ." The first words of the *Florentine Histories* are *"lo animo mio"* ("my purpose") and the last words are *"la Italia."* The chapter on the "extraordinary force" that stifles a return to order ends with a recommendation to study modern things as well as ancient, for while "free spirits [*liberali animi*]" can imitate the latter, they can avoid and abolish the former.[36] Having an aim at least partly practical and reforming, the *Florentine Histories* must have

33. Machiavelli is more explicit in *Disc.* 3:6 (vol. 1, p. 349).

34. *F. H.* 8:2 (end), 8:22 (vol. 2, p. 411).

35. The alternative of patience and conspiracy in 8:1 (vol. 2, p. 379) is false. Both conspiracies related at length had master conspirators; see 7:31, 7:33, 8:2, and cf. *Disc.* 1 pr (end), 9 (on Agis); 3:6 on Alexamenus (vol. 1, p. 345), Pelipodas (vol. 1, p. 352), and the two cautions at the end (vol. 1, p. 358).

36. *F. H.* 5:1; 7:22 (vol. 2, p. 360).

been written not with the methods of scientific history but with the devices of reformers or "new princes." Like any new prince, Machiavelli began by being weaker than the existing princes, and he must have been forced to express himself disingenuously, or as he says, with fraud.[37] If he could have said openly all he intended against "this corrupt world," he would not have had to say it. In the *Florentine Histories,* his method of fraud is to conduct the reader by stages in histories or inquiries that bring him to understand what is wrong with the modern world. Each inquiry considers an aspect of the modern world and offers an opinion that points beyond itself to a better understanding; the inquiries overlap each other because each is provisional and hence transitional. Machiavelli makes his hostility to the modern world plain and clear so that everyone, at whatever level of understanding, can find a reason for changing it, but only at the last stage of the conspiracy, as befits a prudent conspiracy, does one learn of the extent of the conspiracy or even that he has joined a conspiracy. Thus the inquiries of the *Florentine Histories,* being transitional from and to the matter surrounding them, are transitional to each other; and they culminate in an inquiry on conspiracy which impudently claims to be omitted.

The first inquiry (2:1) compares ancient and modern policy on colonies: "Among the great and marvelous orders of ancient republics and principalities that in our times have

37. *Disc.* 2:13; *P.* 7 (vol. 1, p. 26); *F. H.* 3:13 (vol. 2, p. 144). In 5:23 Niccolò Piccino makes an escape from his enemies inside a sack carried on the back of his German servant. This adventure of Niccolò's—for Machiavelli keeps calling him Niccolò in this vicinity—occurs between accounts of two strategems of war that worked because the enemy thought them impossible; and it must be compared with the mistake of another Niccolò in 1:31, who tried to escape to the German emperor. Perhaps our Niccolò will escape from his enemies with an impossible trick, by hiding inside a sack carried not by the emperor but by the Pope (who commissioned this work). At any rate *The Prince* and the *Discourses* were first published under papal authority together with the *Florentine Histories.* Cf. *Disc.* 2:33 and Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* pp. 106–7.

been extinguished was that by which many lands and cities were built anew and at every time." This statement equates colonizing with new building and implies that political vitality demands growth. Yet Machiavelli conceals the harshness of imperialism by attributing it solely to a defect of "nature." Nature (and its contrary), not "history," is the problem of Machiavelli's "histories." Nature does not provide an even fertility of land, and in the absence of human "industry" or "culture" fertile lands become crowded and poor, while unfertile lands remain desert. This explanation does not account for the phenomenon of conquest, although Machiavelli refers to the policy of colonizing in lands "either conquered or empty." And why do the moderns not send colonies? ". . . [B]ecause princes have no desire for true glory and republics no order that deserves to be praised." The defect of the moderns is political, for Machiavelli condemns modern princes and republics impartially and separately. We note that the moderns are not lacking in industry or in the pacific art of farming but it may be that they somehow place too much confidence in nature, as though forgetting its failure to provide the most elementary necessities and the consequent need for human "culture" or cultivation.[38]

The second inquiry (3:1) discusses "the serious and natural enmities . . . between popular men and nobles" in Rome and Florence. In the description of *natural* enmities we have an intimation that nature is not to be understood simply as distinct from human culture nor human culture simply as supplying the defects of nature. Within human culture, among "human things," these natural enmities are "the cause of all the evils that grow up in cities." Yet "diverse effects" can be observed in Rome and in Florence; in

38. Note "industry" as opposed to "force" in *F. H.* 6:2 (vol. 2, p. 275); cf. the chapter preceding, 1:39: the Florentines "had through many divisions destroyed her nobility and that republic was now in the hands of those brought up in trade." See *Disc.* 2:8.

Rome, the enmities were brought to an end by disputes, in Florence, by fighting; in Rome, they ended with a law, in Florence, with the exile and death of many citizens; in Rome, they always increased military virtue, in Florence, they destroyed it entirely; in Rome, they brought very great inequality out of equality, and in Florence, they reduced inequality to a "wonderful [*mirabile*] equality."[39] For the cause of this difference Machiavelli, as we have said, blames the Florentine people. Unlike the Roman people, who wished to enjoy supreme honors with the nobles, the Florentine people fought to govern by themselves without the participation of the nobles. Their desire was "harmful and unjust," but it is not fully explained. Why did the Florentine people wish to govern by themselves, despite the fact that the people do not naturally desire to command? The consequence of their rule has been to destroy in Florence "that virtue in arms and generosity of spirit [*animo*]" possessed by the nobility, with no stated advantage to themselves.

Machiavelli shows in the next inquiry (4:1) that he does not accept the partisan view of either the people or the nobles. Cities, especially (but not only) such as are not well ordered, and that are administered under the name of republic, "often vary their governors and their state not between liberty and servitude, as many believe, but between servitude and license." The ministers of license, he says, are the people, and the ministers of servitude are the nobles; both claim the name of liberty. Thus the alternative of liberty and slavery would be the popular view that "many believe" and that Machiavelli chooses to expose as partisan. Then how can a city be free? A city "can be called free" when by good fortune a good, wise, and powerful citizen orders the laws so as to quiet the humors of the nobles and people or to restrain them so that they cannot work for evil. Founded on good

39. *F. H.* 3:1 (vol. 2, p. 122).

laws and orders, such a city would not need to be maintained, as other cities are, by the virtue of one man. "Many ancient republics," Machiavelli says, had this good fortune, but cities where such laws and orders are lacking "vary between a tyrannical and a licentious state." Now since the tyrannical state does not please the good and the licentious does not please the wise, these cities have to be maintained by "the virtue and fortune of one man."

Natural enmities, it seems, can be repressed with impartial laws and orders established by a "good, wise and powerful man" who makes the "virtue of one man" unnecessary thereafter. Such a man is "the good fortune of the city": good fortune would then seem to be the solution for natural divisions. How likely is this good fortune? By moving from the division between nobles and people regarding liberty to the distinction between a tyrannical state that does not please the good and a licentious state that does not please the wise, Machiavelli indicates the existence of a natural division between the good and the wise regarding good laws and orders. If a powerful citizen appears who is both good and wise, he must have coincidentally two qualities not only different but contrary.[40]

Thus the problem of natural divisions between the nobles and the people continues among those who might be thought above the quarrel; it cannot be solved by the legislation of an impartial man. Yet "many ancient republics" were gifted with good laws and orders and long lives. Perhaps they used "the virtue of one man," as opposed to goodness, and with good laws and orders managed not to depend on "the virtue and good fortune of one man," like the modern states. Machiavelli's regime is impartial, while his conception of virtue

40. See the contrary advice of good men and wise men in 7:13. Rinato de' Pazzi was "considered a wise and good man" (for all the good it did him) because he was lacking in pride, i.e., in the desire to make himself powerful. See note 42.

emphatically is not. The regime achieves impartiality by using the virtue of many men, each of whom is partial to himself, for virtue is always "the virtue of one man." Since Florence failed to restrain the conflict between nobles and people with the proper mixture of rewards and punishments, the city could not make use of its supply of virtuous men, as each was dangerous to every other.[41] It became dependent on the good fortune, as well as the virtue, of one man. The reason for this failure is not explained, but a lack of tolerance for the partiality of virtue, for the desire of princes for true glory, is suggested.[42] Machiavelli does not mention the possibility, dear to Aristotelian political science, of a mixed regime sustained by an impartial middle class, but the reasoning that separates the good from the wise would bear against this possibility.[43]

41. See *F. H.* 2:29 on Ramando di Cardona; 6:6–7 on the murder of Baldaccio.

42. See *F. H.* 3:17, 22 on Florence's ingratitude to Michele di Lando. Michele was both prudent and good. His goodness consisted in "never allowing a thought to enter his mind that was contrary to the general good"; his prudence "allowed him to conduct things in such a way that many of his party yielded to him and the others he could overcome with arms" 3:17 (vol. 2, p. 152). His partisan thoughts clearly were not contrary to the general good, in Machiavelli's view; cf. Epistle Dedicatory (vol. 2, p. 4). Giovanni de' Medici told Rinaldo degli Albizzi that because men are quicker for revenge than gratitude, "the duty of a wise and good citizen, he believed, was not to change the customary orders of the city" 4:10. Then, knowing his man, he advised Rinaldo to follow the policy of his father and gain the gratitude of the people by benefitting them. Rinaldo never considered this, and shortly afterwards Giovanni took his own advice, changing the orders of Florence to benefit the people and himself. Giovanni was a man "of very great prudence," and his prudence consisted in departures from his goodness and a seeming lack of ambition. Florence, i.e. the Florentine people, showed more gratitude for his benevolence, done at the expense of the rich, than it would have shown for conquests taken from enemies, 4:14, 16. Cf. "the grace mixed with power" characteristic of Cosimo and Neri Capponi, 7:2 (vol. 2, p. 331).

43. Party conflict in Florence was for a time moderated by intermediaries using arguments to calm the zeal of both sides, but the arguments said nothing about justice or impartiality and the conflict began anew five years and two chapters later, *F. H.* 2:14, 16.

The central inquiry has been considered. It seemed to show the contrast between the natural order of "worldly things" in movement, within which men contrive their own order and suffer through its decay, and the supernatural, which can stifle at least the return to good order with an "extraordinary force." This contrast modifies the farmer's view of nature given in the first inquiry, that nature and culture are distinct, in the direction suggested by the second inquiry, that natural order applies to human things, especially the divisions in human societies. But now we have a reason why "natural divisions" can have "diverse effects" in Rome and in Florence: not the chance of a good and wise lawgiver, but a supernatural force or the belief in a supernatural force. Virtue needs arms to bring forth "quiet," a kind of disorder to create order. Since order does not create itself, men can be held in disorder by an opinion, a belief in the extraordinary force of the Christian God, which keeps virtue disarmed.

In accordance with his introduction of the supernatural in contrast with the natural, Machiavelli now blames princes rather than peoples; for it is princes who introduce new orders and new ways of life.[44] "With wonder," he says, it will be seen "how so many very noble peoples were held in check by such weak and poorly administered armies." "Princes, soldiers, and heads of republics" were able to maintain their reputations only by the use of frauds, tricks, and arts.[45] This criticism is continued in the next inquiry (6:1) on the costly indecisiveness of modern wars. Modern wars are as expensive for the victors as for the vanquished because they are fought by mercenaries; these take the spoils if they win and wait to be reequipped if they lose. In either

44. "And it is more true than any other truth, that if where there are men there are not soldiers, this arises through a defect of the prince, and not through another defect of the site or of nature," *Disc.* 1:21 (vol. 1, p. 149). Cf. 2:29, sixty-eight chapters later; and Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* p. 178.

45. *F. H.* 5:1 (vo.l 2, p. 220).

case, the prince must take money from his subjects. Victory brought nothing to the benefit of the people and only made the prince more pressing and less respectful. "Ancient and well-ordered republics with their victories used to fill the treasury with gold and silver, distribute gifts to the people, remit tribute to their subjects, and entertain them with games and majestic festivals; those of the time we describe first empty the treasury, then impoverish the people, and do not protect you from your enemies." [46]

It is no wonder, then, that the Florentine people did not wish to share "supreme honors" with the nobles; there were few of the worldly kind to be shared. Why were there few such? Why were mercenaries, "the two sects of armies" which Machiavelli describes in Books 5 and 6, allowed to engross the profits of victory and live comfortably in defeat? One cannot help but recall Machiavelli's remark in the *Discourses* about "our religion . . . which makes us esteem less the honor of the world." [47] For a Christian people, the "supreme honor" is salvation in the afterlife, in which all men may share a "wonderful equality"; but the desire for this honor is consistent only with the nature of a people, since it does not desire to rule. Mercenaries, who play their own game while holding the fate because they hold the arms of the prince, remind one of other intermediaries who set themselves up as necessary to salvation and who thrive in good times and bad.

The sixth inquiry returns to domestic matters after 1434,

46. *F. H.* 6:1 (vol. 2, p. 274); cf. 1:39.

47. *Disc.* 2:2 (vol. 1, p. 237). In *F. H.* 5:2, where Machiavelli mentions the "two sects of armies," he relates an instance in which the Pope preferred a dishonorable peace to a dangerous war against Francesco Sforza. Sforza, having seized some lands of the Pope, sent him a letter with an insolent Machiavellian salutation punning on an ecclesiastical greeting, *invito Petro et Paulo.* At the invitation of, or despite, Peter and Paul: Christianity, despite its best wishes, needs worldly armies, and because of its best wishes, cannot profit from them. Its rootless priests give rise to rootless warriors.

although the narrative on the "two sects of armies" (Sforza's and Piccino's) in the two preceding books had touched on Florentine internal divisions when necessary.[48] Machiavelli begins his inquiry by stating that he wishes to explain "why those who hope that a republic can be united deceive themselves very much in this hope." This is surprising, because he himself had seemed to plant and nourish this hope in his readers. In the Proemium he promised to show the causes of the hatreds and divisions in Florence, so that "citizens who govern republics" can keep themselves united; and he had said that if Florence had had a form of government that would keep her united, she would have been the equal of any republic, ancient or modern. Now we are told that unity is impossible and we are given an explanation for the diverse effects of the natural enmities in Rome and in Florence. Florence suffered under harmful divisions, those accompanied by "sects and partisans," as opposed to the beneficial divisions "that maintain themselves without sects and partisans." Until this point in the *Florentine Histories* Machiavelli, while admitting that divisions are natural, has treated kindly the opinion hostile to parties which he dismisses at the beginning of the *Discourses.*[49] He needed the protection of this opinion in teaching the causes of weakness in his own city in his own times, and he did not reveal its inadequacy before he was ready to say that some divisions are beneficial. Even so, he soothes the shock of discovering that republics can never be united with a continued hostility to partisans, if not to all parties.

Bearing in mind that he cannot prevent enmities, then,

48. *F. H.* 5:4, 15, 27; 6:6, 7, 23.

49. *Disc.* 1:4. To be sure, the attack on parties in *F. H.* 3:5 is deflated at the beginning of 3:6; and Luigi Guicciardini's speech against vengeful discords in 3:11 is diminished by the events related in 3:12 and opposed by the speech of the plebeian leader in 3:13. Note the different effect of Luigi's "true" words and the "persuasions" of the plebeian on the *animi* of their listeners (vol. 2, pp. 141, 145), and the lack of effect of true words in 3:27 (vol. 2, p. 169).

the founder of a republic must seek to prevent sects. "Therefore," Machiavelli says to introduce a well-concealed consequence, he must know "that there are two ways for citizens to acquire reputation in a city: either public ways or private means." The public ways are "winning a battle, acquiring a land, carrying out an embassy with care and prudence, advising the republic wisely and happily." Private means are "benefitting this or that citizen, defending them from magistrates, helping them with money, getting them honors undeservedly, and gratifying the plebs with games and public gifts." From the latter way of proceeding come sects and partisans, but the former way is "not mixed with sects, because it is founded on a common good, not on a private good." This distinction, we note, is between private and public ways of gaining reputation, that is, of gaining a private end; that is why the public ways are said to be "founded on a common good" instead of "aiming at the common good."

Machiavelli makes this implication explicit by almost abandoning the distinction in the next sentence: citizens who use private means will not harm the republic if they do not have "partisans who follow them for their own profit." On the contrary, they will be useful because to succeed, they must try to effect "the exaltation" of the republic, and "particularly watch one another in order that civil limits [*i termini civili*] not be passed."[50] The founder of a republic must admit the need for honors and use them to unite private advantage with the public good. Machiavelli said in the first inquiry that modern states do not send colonies "because princes have no desire for true glory and republics no order that deserves to be praised." Now he combines the two reasons. Praiseworthy order in a republic would encourage the desire for true glory or reputation in its princes, offer prizes

50. The distinction is explicitly abandoned in *F. H.* 7:2, where Cosimo is said to have used his "friends" instead of his "partisans" to oppose his "friends" (vol. 2, p. 331).

to them, and manage the competition.

When the reader understands the need for worldly honor in politics, he will join Machiavelli's conspiracy against Christianity; for Christianity clearly denies the desire for worldly honor. But the precise effects of this denial are unclear, since Christianity despite its intention cannot dispense with worldly honor. Florentine parties may have been "mixed with sects," but the Guelfs and the Ghibellines were not doctrinal parties of priests, and few Florentine politicians were notably pious or easily obedient to sacerdotal authority. In politics, Christianity does not necessarily make men into zealots for otherworldly honor, especially not in its time of corruption. Rather, it prevents the princes who desire worldly honors from pursuing them wholeheartedly, attaining them completely, and enjoying them without a bad conscience. At the same time it offers an illusory protection for the weak that keeps them weak—an excuse for defeat, a consolation in failure, and an avoidance of the natural punishments for imprudence. Christianity keeps men in dependence to God or to themselves, a condition that Machiavelli represents as that of a colony. Florence began as a colony of ancient Rome and now continues as a colony of modern Rome.

THE COLONY OF FLORENCE

Since the Florentine parties took their special character from their origin, it is necessary to attend particularly to the first two books of the *Florentine Histories.* Machiavelli shows that parties arose from the dispute between the emperor and the Pope, between the heir to the vestiges of the Roman empire and the representative of its sanctified spirit. The first book, he says dryly, "tells briefly all the accidents that happened in Italy from the decline of the Roman empire to 1434." [51] Its theme is Rome, not Florence, not even

51. *F. H.* Proemium (vol. 2, p. 7).

the origins of Florence, as we would expect from Machiavelli's decision "to begin my history with the beginning of our city"; Florence is mentioned only three times and carefully not discussed.[52] Its theme is Rome because Florence had its origin in Rome, a protected beginning as a colony of Rome. Thus the first book does not have as its theme "beginnings," for Florence did not have a true, unprotected beginning, as did Rome. Accordingly, the first inquiry does not occur at the beginning of the first book, and when it occurs discusses colonies rather than beginnings. The beginnings of Rome suggest the beginnings of any city, as we know from the first chapter of the *Discourses.*[53] But the origins of Florence must be seen in the decaying empire and growing Church that gave it protection. Florence is kept out of the first book of the *Florentine Histories* so that its protector, Rome, can be examined for the cause and manner of its protection.

In the first chapter we are told that the Roman empire was destroyed by barbarians who followed a policy of colonizing their excess inhabitants. They lived up north in a prolific and healthful region where population often increased to such a multitude that a province would "divide itself in three parts" and send the lucky third south "to seek its fortune." It was fitting that to overthrow so great an empire, founded on the blood of so many virtuous men, the Italian princes not be less sluggish than they were, the ministers less faithless, nor the attacks on it made with less force and persistence than they were. Then in the first inquiry (2:1), we are informed of the "great and wonderful order"

52. *F. H.* 1:5, 26, 39. In 1:26 Machiavelli mentions the wars of both the Visconti against the Guelfs and of Castruccio Castracani against the Florentines; he adds a digression on the Visconti but not on Castruccio. He also includes a discussion of Venice "in its place," 1:3, 28, 29, but not of Florence.

53. Entitled: "What have universally been the beginnings of any city and what was that of Rome."

of ancient republics for colonizing in the same way, except that Machiavelli here stresses the filling of empty lands rather than the emptying of full lands. Florence, it seems, was a product of this very praiseworthy order, having "its beginning from Fiesole and its growth from colonies." [54] In keeping with his avoidance of beginnings, Machiavelli discusses only its growth as a market town under the protection of the reputation of the Roman Republic, i.e., the Roman Empire; he says nothing here of Fiesole or of the "ancient Tuscans." This protection weakened as Rome lost its power and its opportunity to colonize, and Rome was destroyed by barbarians with the vigor to imitate its "great and wonderful order." To protect is to colonize; to be protected is to be a colony; to be a colony is to be conqueror or conquered.

The Roman Empire was destroyed by barbarians, but they were given the opportunity to destroy by the emperors who abandoned Rome for Constantinople and left the western part of the Empire weak. Later we learn that "the emperor became a Christian and left Rome for Constantinople." [55] The disorder that followed was terrifying because not merely princes or governments were changed, but laws, ways of living, and especially religion. The new religion with its miracles fought the customs of the ancient religion, and men died wretchedly, uncertain to which god they should turn, even to which sect of the Christian God, for the disunity of Christianity caused as much affliction as the cruelty of the barbarians. During this disorder the Popes gained authority. The first Popes after St. Peter, because of their holy lives and their miracles, became respected by the people; Christianity was from the first a religion of the people. Then princes found it necessary to adopt the Christian religion as a way out of "the so great confusion existing then in the world." [56]

54. *F. H.* 2:1 (end); cf. "whatever the cause of its origin," 2:2 (vol. 2, p. 62).

55. *F. H.* 1:9 (vol. 2, p. 21); on the affinity between Christianity and the East, see 1:3 (end).

56. *F. H.* 1:9 (vol. 2, p. 21); cf. 1:25 (end); 2:6.

Still, before the coming of the Longobards, the Popes had no other power than the respect they earned for their habits and their teaching; in secular matters they obeyed the kings and emperors, and were sometimes killed by them or used as ministers. The Pope acquired some power in Rome by default when Theodoric made himself King of Italy in Ravenna, and when the Longobards came, they allowed the Pope to become almost the chief of Rome. But as the Eastern Empire declined and the Longobards grew stronger, the Popes began to seek help in France. The many wars of the barbarians in Italy from those times to the present were largely caused by the Popes' summoning help, Machiavelli concludes.[57] The greatest instance was the Pope's summons for Charlemagne, who crossed the Alps and visited Rome, where he "judged that the Pope as vicar of God could not be judged by men" and was proclaimed emperor by the Pope and the Roman people.[58]

The Popes used the opportunity of barbarian invasions, which Machiavelli fails to call heaven-sent, to create the power that could only be maintained by further barbarian invasions. These two powers depended on each other, the Popes on the barbarian kings for that "kingly power" which true princes supply,[59] and the kings on the Pope to rectify the great disorder and introduce quiet and obedience to their kingdoms. Together, they corresponded to the two elements of ancient Rome or any regime: people and princes. But in decadent Rome, the two elements worked badly and could not act and react against each other in a manner to produce the common good.

Why the ancient Roman system failed in modern Italy could be seen in the actions of the crucial factor in the sys-

57. Invitations of Popes to emperors were paralleled and preceded by concessions of Eastern emperors to Western barbarians, 1:3, 4, 6. Cf. Machiavelli's contrary invitation in the title of *P.* 26: "An exhortation to seize Italy and set her free from the barbarians."

58. *F. H.* 1:11 (vol. 2, p. 24).

59. *Disc.* 1:34 (vol., p. 172).

tem, the Pope. The Pope was head of a religion that, scorning worldly honor and political glory, appealed to the people rather than princes; according to the ancient Roman system, he was therefore in the equivocal position of the plebeian prince, ambitious above his rank yet hostile to all of noble rank. Such a man could be "managed" in the Machiavellian-Roman sense by a policy of co-optation into the nobility, in which the plebeian princes were first made rivals to each other for military prizes and afterwards the best or the luckiest selected for noble rank. The "policy" did not require that the nobles in power stay in power, since no harm was done if the plebeian prince defeated his managers and vaulted into the office where he would have to manage others like his former self. All the system seemed to need was the avarice all nobles hold from nature and the prudence some of them display in rising to the highest offices. But to form the combination of prudent avarice, prudence must be free of hostility to avarice and eager to cooperate with it. This was the difficulty in managing the Pope.

The Pope was a prince of the people, who because of the character of the "sect" that gave him office, could not be bribed or rewarded in the usual way with honors. He and the Church he heads have renounced both the use of arms and self-advancement, and so he can neither be offered nor can he accept worldly honors which require the use of arms in one's own advancement. To accept worldly honors in the spirit with which they are offered would reduce him to the level of the other worldly princes in this world and would require him to renounce his claim to superiority over them; yet his office is constituted by that claim alone. As Pope, he cannot be a prince of any kind unless he is superior to the worldly, or the natural, princes. It is his very "spiritual power" that makes him faithless in his worldly engagements.[60]

60. *F. H.* 8:17 (vol. 2, p. 404).

The Pope exercised his authority "first with censure then with censure and arms," as in time he acquired the inferior status of a worldly prince in addition to his superior status, but he acquired worldly status because he had a superior status. His "censures" could inflict "spiritual wounds," whose importance the Emperor Henry IV was the first prince to learn. It was through the power of censures, however, not through fair or equal competition with worldly princes on their level, that the Pope acquired "arms." Henry IV, suffering the spiritual wound of excommunication, came to Canossa to ask pardon of the Pope because he was "obliged by his peoples." [61]

Spiritual wounds do not hurt the spirit merely, but also undermine the worldly rule of princes through the belief of their peoples in the supremacy of otherworldly salvation. The Pope, therefore, wields arms as a consequence of his censures, but not his own arms. Granted the superiority of the divine, he is only the vicar of God, and God does not choose to make Himself the agent of the Pope's worldly designs as if they were directed by a worldly purpose. Machiavelli gives a this-worldly explanation which accounts for both the Pope's existence as a worldly prince and his failure to prosper in that office: "so much are the things that appear feared more at a distance than nearby." [62]

Not wielding his own arms, the Pope must exercise his authority "at a distance." He must work on princes through their peoples; he does not confront them as the prince of his own people. As vicar, he cannot govern directly. In the

61. *F. H.* 1:9 (vol. 2, p. 25); 1:15 (vol. 2, p. 28); cf. 2:16 (vol. 2, p. 79) for the answer Henry IV could not give to the Pope. Lorenzo's answer is in 8:10 (vol. 2, p. 392). But with all his spiritual power the Pope could not prevent the death by diarrhea of his champion the Magnificent Robert, though he did give "the body" every kind of honor, 8:23 (vol. 2, p. 414).

62. *F. H.* 1:19 (vol. 2, p. 34). Note the discrepancy between the purpose of "the heavens" and that of the Pope, 1:25; and see 8:11 for the Florentines' view that God can oppose His vicar.

matter of Thomas à Becket, he imposed a judgment on King Henry II "that a private man would be ashamed to submit to," [63] but he could not make himself obeyed at home in Rome and often had to live elsewhere. As he himself was unmanageable, so for the same reason, lacking his own arms, he could not manage his own people.[64] Therefore his arms had to be foreign.[65] Urban II, hated by his own people and doubting his security amid the divisions of Italy, "turned to a generous enterprise" against the Saracens, "with all other similar enterprises later called the Crusades." [66]

These were the reason (to distract popular discontent) and the occasion (a foreign expedition) which together built the Roman Empire; but they did not build a modern Roman empire. By the virtue of Saladin and the discords of the Christians, all the early gains were lost. Moreover, the Crusades were only one episode in the use of foreign arms by the Popes. From the beginning it was their policy to summon foreign arms, the descendants of barbarians, into Italy.[67] They governed or managed Italy so weakly, and yet persisted despite their weakness so obstinately, because they had inducements or sanctions sufficient to command foreign arms. Thus their power was based on foreign arms in both Machiavellian senses of "foreign," foreign to one's own country and foreign to this world. Their power could not operate for the common good of Italy or any city of Italy or any city.

The foundation of the common good, according to Machiavelli, is the preference for one's own, as this preference makes it possible for orders naturally disparate to coexist if

63. *F. H.* 1:19 (vol. 2, p. 34); cf. the extraordinary banquet of Frate Piero, 7:31.

64. *F. H.* 1:14, 16, 18, 20, 25, 35, 5:2; 6:29; 8:23, 27, 28; *Disc.* 1:12.

65. In *F. H.* 5:7, a Pope employs a cardinal to command his army, then loses the allegiance of the cardinal, who then loses the allegiance of his army back to the Pope.

66. *F. H.* 1:17; cf. 6:33; 7:9.

67. *F. H.* 1:13.

not to live in union. Nobles and people will coexist when the city can expand to serve their needs and provide both glory and security. The common good, to speak plainly, is a good taken from foreigners that is common to one people and its princes; [68] it can subsist only so long as human beings are divided in political allegiance, and understood to be divided by their sects, into natives and foreigners.[69] The Christian Church does not observe this distinction, but the factual truth of its internationalism is subservience to foreigners. If the common good is at the expense of foreigners in booty and glory, princes cannot operate for the common good with foreign arms; the foreigners, that is, the mercenaries, will keep the spoils intended for their employers.[70] At the same time, every Christian prince knows that the people of his land is not his own, but in some part at some times the Pope's. The Pope has no home and many colonies, especially the colony of Florence.[71] The disaffection of his own people is compensated by the allegiance of other peoples, and his incompetence as a worldly prince does not receive its natural punishment.

68. Having lost the war against Filippo Visconti, the Florentine nobles had neither booty to distribute nor glory to offer; they were unable to manage the ambition of Giovanni de' Medici, *F. H.* 4:3–7.

69. In *F. H.* 5:11, "an older and wiser" noble of Lucca condemns the Florentine plebs with the purpose of keeping his own plebs loyal. Even the Pope must understand "a universal peace" as confined to Italy for the purpose of war against the Turks, 6:32 (vol. 2, p. 319), 37.

70. *F. H.* 5:2; note that the beginning of 6:1 applies to the Pope.

71. Machiavelli dwells on the relation of Florence to its colony Volterra in order to show the relation of the Pope to Florence. See *F. H.* 4:17, where, by "God's aid" and contrary to the intention of certain noble Volterrans, Volterra was made a "vicarate" of Florence; and cf. 7:30 (end) and 31 (beg.). In *Disc.* 1:49 (vol. 1, p. 200) Machiavelli says that Florence began as a slave city, in direct contradiction to Bruni, who claimed that Florence had a free beginning under the Roman Republic and who tried to trace the beginning of Florence beyond that of Rome to the Tuscans, Bruni, *Historiae Florentini Populi,* Bk. I, "Laudatio Florentinae Urbis," in Hans Baron, ed., *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 244–47. Baron has rightly stressed the importance of this point in Bruni's thought, in *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance,* rev. ed. (Princeton, 1966), pp. 62–75; cf. p. 465, n. 1.

PARTIES IN ITALY

Machiavelli does not believe that the papacy has become corrupt through its temporal possessions. He objects to its *not* being corruptible in the worldly way. His objection, therefore, goes to the otherworldly essence of Christianity, and could not be satisfied by a Protestant or even a Puritan rearrangement of the sacerdotal hierarchy. The Pope acquired his temporal possessions out of the necessities of ruling, which are the same for all princes in this world, including the princes of a church. In the absence of a direct providence of God, ruling men in this world is necessarily worldly. That is why the Popes stirred up new dissensions in Italy "now through the charity of religion, now through their own ambition."

It is true that Pope Celestine, "being a hermit and full of holiness," renounced the papacy after six months, and on the other hand that Popes have increasingly promoted their relatives to the extent that in the future one may expect the Popes to try to make the papacy hereditary.[72] The ratio of piety to ambition has diminished through the history of the papacy, and the Church could now be considered corrupt in the Christian sense. In this condition the Church is now also perhaps open to attack as never before. But whatever the current mixture of motives, piety and ambition in the Popes tended to the same result of disunion and enfeeblement. Pope Nicholas III was the first to promote his relatives; yet Machiavelli says only that "he was the first of Popes who openly revealed his own ambition."[73] Boniface VIII seems to be criticized for "desiring too much to satisfy his appetite" in using the "weapons" of excommunication and of crusade against the Colonna family in Rome; they might have been

72. *F. H.* 1:23 (vol. 2, p. 38); 1:25 (vol. 2, p. 40); cf. 1:35 on Gregory XII, who renounced the papacy and was merely replaced, and 6:36 on Pius II, who abandoned his "private passions" but got his reward just the same.

73. *F. H.* 1:23 (vol. 2, p. 39).

used "virtuously through the charity of faith" but instead were turned against Christians "for his own ambition."[74] But what other use could he make of his arms? Excommunication is a weapon that cuts Christians only; crusades are directed against foreigners. By confusing the two, Machiavelli seems to indicate that the Pope is compelled to treat all men, including the people of Rome, now as brothers, now as enemies. If pious, the Popes could not ignore the necessities of ruling in this world; if ambitious, they could not obey them. They have "used badly" both censures and arms because they must.[75]

In the thirty-ninth chapter of the first book of the *Histories,* Machiavelli lists the five principal powers of Italy, all of them "disarmed of their own arms." The Pope is in the center of the list, disarmed "because arms are not suitable for him as an ecclesiastic." The other four powers are disarmed for reasons that describe, in Machiavelli's characteristic translation of divine politics into human terms, various features of papal rule. Duke Filippo Visconti of Milan is disarmed; "remaining secluded in his chamber and not letting himself be seen, he managed his wars through his commissioners." The Venetians were disarmed because "when they turned to land, they put aside those weapons which they had used gloriously in the sea" and like the other Italians managed their armies under someone else's rule. Queen Joanna of Naples and the Florentines were disarmed of necessity, the former because she was a woman, the latter because frequent divisions had destroyed the nobility and left the republic in the hands of "men educated in trade." Florence followed "the orders and the fortune of the others" at this time, in 1434.[76]

74. *F. H.* 1:25 (vol. 2, p. 41).
75. *F. H.* 1:9 (vol. 2, p. 23); cf. 1:21, 22.
76. *F. H.* 1:39 (vol. 2, p. 57). The five powers are disarmed partly by choice, predominantly (three to two) of necessity. Cf. 1:29, 5:3. "Men educated or nourished [*nutricati*] in trade" can refer to spiritual merchants.

The system of modern parties is disposed by the influence of the disarmed prince of Christianity and his commissioners. Since modern princes and peoples cannot operate with and against each other for the common good, their parties seek foreign alliances. Whereas the party system of Rome was domestic, based on the common good acquired by common hostility to foreigners, the modern party system is between states or international. It consists essentially of leagues between peoples who favor the Pope as opposed to princes who favor the emperor, aided by exiles expelled by their people. Modern states, incapable of allying their own princes and peoples, are captured by one party or the other in league with its counterpart in a foreign state.[77] The modern parties seek help from those who are like-minded elsewhere, since they cannot operate successfully with their complements at home.

We might say today that the basis of parties had become ideological rather than territorial, but Machiavelli would say "foreign" rather than "domestic," divine rather than worldly. This world, he thought, is divided into lands by differences so exclusive that they can be overcome only by neglecting the interests of this world.[78] But the interests of this world are split, for men are divided by nature into princes and peoples. Thus if a common good in this world is possible only in a territory, it must consider the interests of both the local princes and the local people. Leagues of the like-minded, ignoring the difference between natives and foreigners, produce partisan victories and never achieve a com-

77. *F. H.* 5:6.

78. See *F. H.* 5:8, where Rinaldo, by identifying the holy and the just, argues that the common good of Florence is to be found in justice to its exiles, not locally at home. In a lachrymose and enthusiastic response to Neri Capponi's speech, the Venetian Senate exclaimed that their *patria* would always belong in common to the Florentines and themselves, 5:21 (vol. 2, p. 250). Cf. the distinction between the celestial and the terrestrial fatherland in 5:34 (vol. 2, p. 271), thirteen chapters later. See also the reply of the Pratesi to Bernardo Nardi, 7:26.

mon good.[79] Such victories often wear the appearance of justice because they right a preceding wrong, but, because they also create a new wrong, they must be repeated in series or else in alternation, to the result of misery in the people and death and exile for the princes. The dead are gone and the miserable are not obvious; so the surest sign of corruption in party politics is the crowd of exiles who have suffered partisan defeat. They find themselves in the hard position of being impotent except to hurt the country they love, for the exile without a fatherland can at best attain the reputation of a mercenary.[80]

The Pope, we have seen, needed the kingly power of the emperor to sustain the power of the Church in Italy. He also had to fight the emperor, who could not be expected to serve as a mere subordinate in this design. The dispute between Pope Alexander II and Henry IV, in which the latter suffered "spiritual wounds," was, Machiavelli says, "the seed of the Guelf and Ghibelline humors," the parties of the Pope and the emperor. This single dispute is made responsible, like a seed, for continuing domestic party conflict: Why? The mutual hostility of the Pope and the emperor was sustained and rendered permanent in the modern party system by the mutual dependence which has been explained. Since each power was, as it were, a factor in the regime of the other, neither could destroy or ignore the other as a foreigner; and yet they could not combine in one regime to support a common good.

As a result of the "Guelf and Ghibelline humors, Italy, when without barbarian invasion, was torn by intestinal

79. *F. H.* 7:21.

80. Consider the exile's argument of Rinaldo, asking the Duke of Milan to be doctor to Florence's internal ills, *F. H.* 5:8. But why should the Duke of Milan wish to make Florence healthy? In politics the doctor must look to his own health. Cf. the parallel argument of a noble of Lucca, note 69.

wars."[81] Intestinal wars were the disease left by the barbarian cure, for with its Christian constitution, Italy could never unite against a foreigner. In every Italian city the people had a common otherworldly, that is, ecclesiastical allegiance; and in consequence their opponents had a common need to league with each other and with the emperor or some other counterweight to the Pope.[82] If a single prince had succeeded in uniting Italy in one kingdom, he would still have encountered the power of the Church in the extraterritorial allegiance of the people to the ecclesiastical hierarchy within his territory; he would have substituted for Guelf and Ghibelline party conflict the episcopal disputes of the Christian kings outside Italy. But a single prince could not succeed in uniting Italy because of the temporal possessions of the Pope; in Italy, the Pope had a territory, not merely an office, to defend. He therefore brought in foreigners to Italy more readily than he could send one Christian king to enforce his will against another. It was easier to pay the doctors' fees by allowing them to feed on the patient than to get them to collect from each other.

Affairs in Italy were complicated by the number of participants, for there were many powers and both princes and Popes had short lives.[83] The alignment of Guelf and Ghibelline powers was surely not perfect, unaffected by circumstances. At one point the Pope, to keep the emperor out of Italy, deserted the Guelfs and welcomed the entry of John, King of Bohemia, who had been summoned by the Ghibellines. This overturn of established allegiances did not change the system, however; the Pope gained nothing from his faithlessness and the King of Bohemia nothing from his faith.[84]

81. *F. H.* 1:15 (vol. 2, p. 29). Sixty-six Guelf and Ghibelline families are listed in 2:4.
82. *F. H.* 1:21, 22, 26, 27, 28.
83. *F. H.* 1:23 (vol. 2, p. 40).
84. *F. H.* 1:28.

Thus the dispute between Pope and emperor was the prototype, as well as the origin, of the modern parties. In all the events what remains constant as the essence of the system is the inability to achieve a domestic regime. Foreigners were not merely the material of the regime, the booty and the victims of a domestic alliance between princes and people of a common land; they were a factor in the regime itself. Modern government is confused between "things outside" and "things inside," [85] and the cause is a deeper confusion of allegiance between the other world and this. "Barbarian invasion" and "intestinal wars" were fundamentally identical; so it was no wonder that they were politically connected. This bad system was against nature, by which Machiavelli means this world. It denies the claims of this world, in particular the claims that princes make because of their nature. Yet, though unnatural, it continues; the system, as we say today, was in equilibrium, and by the operation of an "extraordinary force."

THE FIRST DIVISION IN FLORENCE

The Florentine parties were modern parties of this description. Machiavelli shows this by separating his account of the origin of the modern parties in Italy, given in Book 1, and his account of the origin of the Florentine parties in Book 2. By this rather artificial separation he gives the Florentine parties a chance to begin, as it were, on their own, in conformity to the natural partisanship of men. When the characteristic modern corruption appears, as it does very soon, we know it must be attributed to a general context of corruption rather than to a bad beginning peculiar to Florence. "As Florence was late in following the sects of Italy,

85. *F. H.* Proemium; 2:5 (foreign judges), 32 (beg.); 6:8 (beg.); 7:25 (beg.). In 8:10 Lorenzo asks: "If we have then honored strangers, how have we injured relatives?" (vol. 2, p. 393).

so she was more afflicted by them." [86]

Machiavelli relates "the cause of the first division" in Florence, even though it is "very well known" from being celebrated by Dante and many other writers. The cause turns out to have been "the chance" that a young knight could be tempted to break his pledge of marriage to one rich and wellborn girl for another, equally rich and wellborn but more beautiful.[87] This act of infidelity brought revenge from the family of the slighted girl, who killed the knight and with "this homicide" divided the city between partisans of the Buondelmonti, the knight's family, and partisans of the Uberti, relatives of the girl. After relating this incident, Machiavelli in the next chapter begins to speak of the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence: "[M]uch as our city was divided, so all Italy had for a long time been divided, into Guelfs and Ghibellines." He does not say how the small incident of imprudence and private revenge was absorbed into the grand dispute between the Pope and the emperor. Though he lists the Buondelmonti in the group of families belonging to the Guelf party and the Uberti among the Ghibellines, he does not say why the chance division into partisans of the Buondelmonti and the Uberti became the all-Italian division into Guelfs and Ghibellines, which had its seed in a great confrontation between the Pope and the emperor and its necessity in their mutual hostility and dependence. The sequence of chance incident and great division recalls Aristotle's remark that "factions arise not over small things but out of small things, and they are carried on over great things." [88] But what is the precise connection be-

86. *F. H.* 2:2 (vol. 2, p. 62); cf. 6:9.

87. *F. H.* 2:3 (vol. 2, p. 63); the temptation is in the first quoted speech of the work.

88. Aristotle *Politics* 1303b18–19; cf. 1303b39–1304a4. See the "little changes" of *F. H.* 2:5 (vol. 2, p. 15) and the "little things" of *Disc.* 3: 33 (vol. 1, p. 415). Bruni merely adds the force of the Italian parties to this incident without attempting to see a connection, *Historiae Florentini Populi*, Bk. II, p. 49.

tween the small matter and the great?

When the Uberti party was meditating revenge, some of them feared the evils that might result from their retaliation; but one man, Mosca Lamberti, stilled these doubts, saying that those who think of many things never finish them, and he concluded with the adage: "What's done is ended" (*Cosa fatta capo ha*). He could not have been more wrong, but why? Why did the sense of injury linger in the form of party rivalries? In Dante's version of the story, this incident is called "the seed of ruin and misery" for Italy, while for Machiavelli Canossa was the seed of the Italian parties and this incident merely the cause of the first division in Florence. Dante quotes the adage in the mouth of Mosca, who now knows he forgot about divine retribution.[89] Machiavelli carefully says nothing of divine retribution, and we note only that Florence had no institution for public retribution to replace private revenge. As in the case of accusation and calumny,[90] it lacks the practice of management which could focus punishment on the faithless young knight, his bride's mother, who tempted him, or Mosca Lamberti, who loosed the revenge. Christianity is responsible for this lack both because it weakens public authority and because it excites and sustains private revenge. The sin for which Mosca suffers in Dante's *Inferno* is not injustice but too much justice and not enough prudence. Machiavelli seems to agree, and in regard to a later division of parties he implies that the blame for this sin is on Christianity itself.

The Albizzi and the Ricci families had long hated each other when in 1353 they nearly clashed as the result of a false rumor to each that one was using the opportunity of a general call to arms to attack the other. Uguccione de' Ricci, head of his family, then decided to gain superiority

89. *Inferno* 28:103–10; cf. 13:144; *Paradiso* 16:136–44.

90. *Disc.* 1:7, 8; in *F. H.* see especially Proemium; 1:11; 2:12–14; 3:3–11, 19, 20, 25; 4:19–22, 25–27; 6:30; 7:10.

"through the ordinary way" by the renewal of an old law. This law was established after the victory of the Emperor Charles I in 1267; it reserved authority to the Guelfs over the Ghibellines.[91] In time, Machiavelli says, through various accidents and new divisions, this authority had so nearly fallen into oblivion that many descendants of the old Ghibellines held the chief magistracies.[92] Uguccione proposed to renew this law against the Ghibellines, since it would exclude the Albizzi, who "many thought" were descended from Ghibellines. Piero degli Albizzi discovered this intention and decided to favor it, thinking that if he opposed it he might be declared a Ghibelline. Those who were declared Ghibelline and excluded from office were called "the admonished." "Admonishing" then became a regular institution in Florence of purging through calumny; so the renewal of this law was "the beginning of many evils."

"No law more damaging to a republic can be made than one which looks back a long time," Machiavelli says without elaboration.[93] Since he rarely commits himself in this way without possibility of escape, it will be worthwhile to see what he is saying; and to do this, it is necessary to translate in the usual way from human politics to divine or divine-human politics. The most damaging law might be the one that looks back the longest time; in any case that law is of the class of the most damaging. It is the law of obedience to God by which all men are sinners because they are involved in the original sin.

Original sin is *the* cause of divine retribution; it is *the* reason why, in the Christian doctrine, what is done by men is

91. *F. H.* 2:10.

92. This was not true, but Machiavelli wished to draw attention to the descendants of evil-doers and the descent of partisanship; see F. Gaeta, ed., *Istorie Fiorentine*, p. 215, n. 3.

93. *F. H.* 3:3; this chapter begins seven consecutive chapters in which "sect" occurs. Looking backward is of course unfavorable to the nobles, 4:14 (vol. 2, p. 188); 7:10; *Dite.* 1:37 (end).

not ended for God, and consequently not for men. Since original sin makes all men sinners, it justifies an absolute revenge or retribution which appears in the minds of the godly or those who have persuaded themselves they have been forgiven their sins. Belief in divine retribution, since it confers grace on the godly, gives a sterner cogency to human retribution, instead of the patience with human weakness one might otherwise expect.[94] If every injury must be paid for, men are more rather than less eager to exact the payment.

When this belief in divine retribution reaches back to the sin of the first men, and so includes the present rulers no less than the meanest subject or strangest foreigner, it becomes politically unmanageable.[95] Only the transpolitical priests who bear no arms can absolve, and their interest is not that of the princes nor of the republic. Indeed, they can defend their worldly status only by dividing their enemies, and for this purpose they can never allow old wrongs to lose their stink. The freedom of priests and the fervor of the godly set the ends and means of politics among politicians who were in neither category but had to accept the condition of unmanageable partisanship. As these were the great majority of rulers, and as they were condemned and opposed not only by Machiavelli but also by reforming priests like Savonarola, it took a sharp eye to discern overmuch religion as the cause of the many evils of Italian politics. Machiavelli had a sharp eye.

Florentine partisanship feeds on the Christian spirit, as Machiavelli sees it, of absolute revenge. This revenge may not have been intended by the religion which endorses the state-

94. *F. H.* 6:20; 7:4, 19, 21; 8:10. On the connection between revenge and "inside and outside," see 2:37 (vol. 2, p. 114).

95. The characteristic difference between the nobles and the people in regard to vengeance is portrayed in *F. H.* 2:26–27. The nobles argued against a vengeful pursuit of Castruccio Castracani because it was unnecessary; then the people broke their promise to the exiles helping them against Castruccio because it was unnecessary to keep it, and turned their vengeance against the nobles.

ment "judge not that ye be not judged," but the natural desire for revenge in men is too powerful. If this desire is condemned and denied, it will expand and find expression in the belief that God has judged in favor of oneself or one's party.[96] It is much safer and more humane to control this desire than to deny it, for men will feel it themselves and must incur it in others. Human necessity operates through the movement of human things as new dangers and new attractions come to view. When men see these things, for instance a more beautiful girl, men separate themselves from their old loves and hates; they are faithless.[97] They incur the revenge of their old loves or of their fathers. Since one's faith is to one's own as formerly understood, or to one's *old* own, the fundamental distinction in Machiavelli's thought is not between one's own as the customary and the good (as for the classical political

96. See the speech of the Milanesi to Count Francesco Sforza, *F. H.* 6:20. Though outwitted by the Count, they tell him that God will punish him if—and they give the two conditions of divine retribution—faithlessness offends God and if God does not decide to befriend the wicked for some hidden good. Cf. 3:11 (vol. 2, p. 139), 27.

97. On a Florentine embassy to Venice, Neri Capponi pretended that Florence was helping Venice out of liberality and not necessity, and he boasted to the Venetian Senate: "It is not possible that an old love or an old hate be easily cancelled by new merits or new offenses," *F. H.* 5:21 (vol. 2, p. 249). The next year he besieged and captured the territory of the Count of Poppi, who seeing himself "abandoned by God and by men," surrendered. He begged Neri to leave him the state that his fathers had held for nine hundred years and from whom Neri's fathers had received "countless benefits." Neri replied that he must be deprived of his state "necessarily" for the sake of "example," which was not the "eternal example of your clemency" that the count had spoken of in 5:35. Neri here used necessity as an argument when none existed, and before, when necessity was present, he did not mention it. Besides, the "old hatred" of the Florentines for the Duke of Milan was sustained by their present fear of the Florentine exiles, 5:10 (vol. 2, p. 248) Book 5 tells of Florentine successes that came about because Florence understood its own necessity, though imperfectly, as is made clear in 5:18, the central chapter of the central book of the Florentine section of the work. 6:29 contains a parody of the Last Supper to illustrate the necessity of infidelity. 6:30 contains a Machiavellian view of the same infidelity disguised in the infidelity of Gherardo Gambacorti, who despite his oath abandoned his son to his enemies; cf. *Disc.* 3:3–5.

philosophers) but between one's own as the customary and one's own simply.[98] "One's own simply" is expressed in Machiavelli's phrase, "one's own arms." Necessity rightly understood and properly accepted forces men to place faith in their own arms rather than "with mercenary and faithless arms." [99] This principle limits the desire for revenge because it teaches men to avoid the revenge that promises the consequence of "many evils." Indeed, it could be stated in the adage "what's done is ended," because properly applied by Mosca Lamberti that adage would have precluded revenge against a youth who broke his faith by falling in love with a more beautiful girl. But the principle also justifies revenge to the limit of prudence, for men cannot afford the humility of placing their lives in the hands of foreigners.[100]

Parties in Florence had evil effects because they were used, under the influence of the Christian religion, as instruments of private revenge. This transpolitical religion does not distinguish between domestic and foreign affairs; it keeps modern princes from seeing the distinction clearly, and its priests, so far as they can, prevent princes from acting on the basis of the distinction. But the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs, as we have seen, is necessary to the distinction between public and private affairs, for the public is based on the common good of two disparate orders of men who happen to inhabit a locality together. They will ally if they have enemies to oppose; and if they ally, they will sustain the public good against private interests within. There will be no

98. After his father's death Piero de' Medici received the insincere advice, under which "his ruin was hidden," to collect his father's old debts. Piero did this and fell into popular disfavor for failing to appreciate the difference between what was his own father's some time ago and what was recently and hence truly his own, *F. H.* 7:10 (vol. 2, p. 343); cf. 6:5, 17; 7:12, 16, 18. Note *Sogliono* at the beginning of *F. H.* 5:1, at the beginning of the speech in 6:20, and at the beginning of *The Prince.*

99. *F. H.* 6:20 (vol. 2, p. 300).

100. *F. H.* 6:12.

natives if there are no foreigners, and no public good if there are no natives. The very universality of Christianity causes it to support private attachment to one's own against public control. When this universality is applied to the belief in absolute revenge, the result is violent excitement of a private passion.

Machiavelli shows the necessary condition for the primacy of the public good in his discussion of the two conspiracies in Books 7 and 8. Both took place in churches, and with encouragement from Christian offices that Machiavelli relates in detail; and both were directed for private revenge against allies of the moment and enemies of the Pope, Duke Galeazzo Sforza and the Medici brothers. Both were moved by men of frustrated ambition, the first by ardent youths and the second by a family of high position that could not bear continued injuries from the Medici. Christianity, Machiavelli seems to say, lets revenge loose but holds down ambition. It imposes on the human spirit (*animo*), and especially on the princes whose character is spiritedness, a goal of vengeance that can be traced ultimately to divine vengeance for the original sin; at the same time it denies the value of the worldly honors and rewards by whose attraction human spiritedness can be made to serve the needs of mankind. "So our Italian princes feared in others that virtue which was not in themselves, and destroyed it." [101] Machiavelli does not take a high view of the public good; he does not suppose it to be nobler than private goods. He frowns on revenge, but not on ambition; and in this, as in many other ways, he argues the reverse of Christianity.

FLORENTINE AND ITALIAN PARTIES

Machiavelli mentions three separate divisions which produced the Florentine parties. The first division was the

101. *F. H.* 7:8 (vol. 2, p. 342); cf. 6:4, 7, 21.

dispute between the Buondelmonti and the Uberti, which began, as we have seen, with a broken pledge of marriage and became accidentally involved with the Guelfs and Ghibellines when Emperor Frederick II used the Uberti to strengthen his power in Tuscany against the Church. In time the Uberti were defeated, and by 1298, though some anger and suspicion remained between the nobles and the people, "everyone was living harmoniously and in peace." [102] Then arose the division between the Cerchi and the Donati families, or the Whites and the Blacks, as they called themselves. This division was imported from Pistoia where a card game between members of two families had led to quarrel, injury and harsh revenge. One of these families was related to the Donati in Florence, whose head was Messer Corso Donati, at that time one of the chief men in the city; and in exhaustion and despair, this family came to Messer Corso for support, while the other came to Messer Corso's rival in Florence, Messer Veri de' Cerchi. By these interventions the ancient hatred between the Cerchi and the Donati was so aroused that the Pope sent for Messer Veri and ordered him to make peace.

The result of the Pope's interference was, as always, unfortunate. Messer Veri pretended not to be at war, so that he did not need to make peace, and when he returned from Rome without any settlement, "humors" were so hot that "any slight accident, however it came, could make them burst." [103] It came at a funeral, when both parties came to blows; after this the *Signori,* acting with "the advice and prudence" of Dante, called the people to arms and expelled many of the Blacks and some of the Whites. Messer Corso went to the Pope, and the Pope sent Charles of Valois, brother of the King of France, to Florence to secure the return of Messer Corso and the triumph of the Blacks.

102. *F. H.* 2:15 (vol. 2, p. 78).
103. *F. H.* 2:17 (vol. 2, p. 79).

In the first division the connection between the sects of Italy and the Florentine parties was accidental; indeed, we had to search for a connection in the influence of Christianity between the unmanaged revenge of the incident in Florence and the dispute between the Pope and the emperor. Then in the second division, the domestic incident led to the politics of the Italian sects through the Pope's partisan peacemaking. The third division, between the Albizzi and the Ricci, was simply imposed on Florence through the dispute between the Pope and the emperor. Those families had taken arms and through a false rumor had nearly used them against each other, because they were defending Florence against the menace of a band of mercenary adventurers left unpaid after a war between the Pope and the emperor. Though the old division between Guelfs and Ghibellines had nearly fallen into oblivion, Uguccione de' Ricci revived it, as we have seen, with his proposal to "admonish" the Ghibellines.

Machiavelli thus presents three possibilities: generation of parties from within through uncontrollable revenge; imposition from without of the parties of the Christian system; or the central case of both generation and imposition. From within or without, the Florentine parties received their special character from Christianity. Moreover, Machiavelli moves his explanation from parties generated from within, accidentally (it seems) related to the "sects" of Italy, to parties imposed from without by those sects. As the *Florentine Histories* progress, Florence becomes more and more "foreign," barbarian, Roman. The early separation of Rome and Florence in Books 1 and 2 prepares and displays the gradual overcoming of that separation in a work dedicated to a Florentine Pope.

THE DIVISIONS OF MODERN PRINCES

What distinguishes ancient from modern party conflict, in Machiavelli's first statement, is the number of divisions in

modern party conflict. He says the Florentine divisions are "very notable" because they were many; Florence was "not content with one." Of these many he specifies three: among the nobles, between the nobles and the people, and "lastly" (*in ultimo*) between the people and the plebs; and "many times it happened that one of these parties, having become superior, divided itself in two." [104] We are left in confusion about the number of kinds of divisions and the number of divisions, as Machiavelli does not make the distinction. Only the third division is of a new kind, and it apparently exhausts the three kinds, which are not "many." The new division presupposes that the people have won over the nobles; and they have won, we have seen, because the nobles were divided into armed and disarmed princes. The difference between ancient and modern party politics is that in modern party politics the people have won.

Accordingly, Machiavelli says that by repeated divisions the Florentines had destroyed the nobility and the republic put in the hands of "men educated in trade" (1:39); and as he describes toward the end of Book 2 events in the rule of the Duke of Athens, in which the nobility of Florence was finally destroyed, he refers to the "middle citizens" (*i mediocri cittadini*). He also lists three kinds of citizens, the great, the people, and the artisans (*grandi, popolani, e artefici*), and in another place speaks of the great, the lesser people (*il popolo minuto* or *la plebe minuta*), and the people (*il popolo*), a middle class of men.[105] In Books 2 and 3, Machiavelli considers the possibility that modern politics is characterized by a party of the middle, but then afterwards for some reason he resumes his view of the division of all men in politics into nobles and people. He seems to discover a new party division in modern politics arising from the

104. *F. H.* Proemium (vol. 2, pp. 5–6), cf. 2:21 (vol. 2, p. 85).

105. *F. H.* 2:34 (vol. 2, p. 104), 36 (vol. 2, p. 110), 40 (vol. 2, pp. 117–18); 3:18 (vol. 2, p. 154). See "Discourse on Reforming the State of Florence" (vol. 2, pp. 532–34).

victory of the people and then to lose interest in it. In the very inquiry which divides the material on the middle party (3:1), Machiavelli speaks merely of "the grave and natural enmities . . . between the popular men and the nobles," or "between the people and the nobles."

The ambiguity between "popular men" (*popolari*) and "the people" (*popolo*) can be found in Machiavelli's discussion of Roman parties.[106] "Popular men" come from the people but are not of the people; they share the natures but not the honors and titles of the nobility. Machiavelli uses this ambiguity in the *Florentine Histories* to show how "the grave and natural enmities" operate unmanageably in the modern setting. He has a leader of the plebs, "one of the most ardent and of greatest experience," speak to the other "plebeian men," urging them to continue their crimes until they are completed, until "either we shall become princes of the city or we shall have such a share that not only will past errors be forgiven but we shall have authority of power to threaten new injuries." Take no account of shame, conscience, or reputation, the speaker advises, for those who conquer are never disgraced because of the way they conquer; and all who conquer do so either by fraud or force. Then he urges further force against the wealthy and the heads of the guilds. "I confess," he says, "that this plan is bold and dangerous; but . . . spirited men never take account of danger in great things, for those enterprises that begin with danger always finish with reward. . . ."[107] But whose reward? The frank immoralism of this unnamed speaker, whom Machiavelli chose to speak in his account of the year 1378, conceals the purpose of the speaker. We see that he asserts all conquest is by force or fraud and does not mention any fraud in his own plan. The fraud is in the difference between his ardent

106. *Disc.* 1:4–6.
107. *F. H.* 3:13 (vol. 2, pp. 143–44).

nature and the nature of his audience; as he says, the reward comes to the "spirited men" (*uomini animosi*), not to the plebs. When the people conquer, the popular men become nobles.

This speech occurs in Book 3, after the people have won their victory over the nobles and then have divided themselves. Indeed, this division took place immediately. The Duke of Athens had been brought to Florence by the nobles to frighten and awe the people, much like a Roman dictator. But the Florentine nobles were incapable of managing him to their end. On the contrary, they were exposed and punished as the promoters of his odious tyranny;[108] so they went down after him. Yet after "the great" were conquered, Machiavelli notes that three kinds of people, "powerful, middle, and low" (*potente, mediocre, e basso*), remained to share the government.[109] Included among the powerful of "the people" were the Medici and the Rondinegli, and Machiavelli says of the later division begun by the Ricci and the Albizzi that the Albizzi party, the revived Guelf sect, contained "all the ancient nobles with the greater part of the more powerful people."[110]

Thus the new division of modern party politics into people and plebs, which might seem to create a new middle class between the nobles and the plebs of ancient party politics, results merely from the natural differences between princes and people as they appear in the modern setting. The people as opposed to the plebs, or the powerful people as opposed to the low, are merely plebeian princes generated from below, the Tribunes of modern politics, but with the difference

108. *F. H.* 2:32, 33, 37, 39. To expose the arrogance of the nobles was the unconscious role of the Archbishop of Florence, who in accordance with his office and his natural goodness intervened to calm the party dispute and, still in accordance with both his office and his nature, exacerbated it.

109. *F. H.* 2:42.

110. *F. H.* 3:8, 21; cf. 2:11 (vol. 2, p. 72).

that they have defeated the ruling princes, the "ancient nobles." When the "popular men" win, they displace the "nobles," killing many and exiling more, but under the conditions of modern politics, they can manage new plebeian princes or absorb the ancient nobles who may remain, no better than their predecessors. After 1378, they were divided into princes of the people and of the plebs, and the middle had disappeared.[111] This new division is a consequence of the division within the nobility which permitted "the people" to conquer, and the nobility was divided by the interference of Christianity.

The middle class between nobles and people was really a half-armed or disarmed nobility ignorant of the practices of mastery yet by nature incapable of tolerating subjection.[112] Their guilds had been endowed with a kind of political power by the Ghibellines, acting in fear of the Guelfs and their champion, Charles of Anjou. When the Ghibellines tried to take back this gift, and were defeated and expelled, the guilds thereafter supported the Guelfs. From this time (1266), each guild received a magistrate to administer justice to all under its jurisdiction, and it enjoyed the power of presenting armed men under its banner when called upon.[113] In a few years, according to Machiavelli, the guilds took over all government in the city. Indeed, it was they who established the magistracy of the *Signori* from which nobles were excluded. They were themselves divided into more and less honored guilds, called "greater" and "lesser," which sustained the difference between the people and the plebs. The greater guilds were favored by the Captains of the Guelf party, who had acquired rights to certain magistracies at the time of the expulsion of the Ghibellines and consti-

111. *F. H.* 3:18; 4:2, 27; 5:4.

112. *F. H.* 2:39 (vol. 2, p. 116), 42 (vol. 2, p. 120); 3:17, 18, 21. If the nobles are not arrogant, they are abject; there is no middle possibility of "modesty."

113. Cf. *F. H.* 2:5 and 2:8, 11, 22.

tuted a separate power within the city, somewhat like the Church itself, with a palace of their own.[114]

Thus the guilds did not head a middle class by whose commercial vigor and skill the ancient nobility was displaced and debased; they were, rather, the undeserving beneficiaries of ecclesiastical interference in politics. They replaced the nobility because the nobility had been sapped by the Christian disdain for honors of this world and then had been directly attacked by the Pope, the Church, the Guelfs, and their foreign allies. In replacing the nobility they complicated the nomenclature of Florentine party politics to the point that it became necessary for Machiavelli to refer to "a very noble popular family,"[115] yet it was not they fundamentally, but the Church, that ruled the city. When politics is divided into sacred and secular as defined by the sacred, secular politics can fall into the hands of merchants, "men educated in trade." Such men are the remnant of a spirited nobility, not the leaders of a rising class.

In ancient party politics, the plebeian princes, intermediaries between the two natural parties of men, are managed and absorbed by the princely party. But in the modern system, leagues of partisans are managed by the intermediaries, both sacred and secular, who scurry through many complexities and confusions to the business of cunning and bungle. The difficulty is that the modern system puts too great a burden on the princes: they have not only to seek the honors of this world against other princes, but also to maintain the interest of the world itself against those who place the supreme honors in the afterlife. Under Christian politics, one of the two natural parties, the popular as embodied in the Church, advances the argument for the supernatural; the other natural party is left to defend the notion of natural

114. *F. H.* 2:11, 12, 13; 3:10, 12.

115. *F. H.* 3:9 (vol. 2, p. 135); cf. 3:4. On the "signs" of popular nobility, see 2:34–37; 3:1; 4:27.

partisanship, which is to say the desirability of this world's honors.[116] No man can reach for honors while he is considering or defending the very status of honor; nor can he defend honor in general while his own honor is at stake.[117]

The princely party is in the position of a party having to defend partisanship and the party system, for in modern politics the status of honor cannot be taken for granted. Lacking ambition, the people never understand it or appreciate the necessity for it; and when they are fortified in the fortresses of Christianity, they can succeed in defeating the natural party of the ambitious. This party, because of the nature of ambition, is always potentially at odds with itself; it can achieve unity by extending the ambitions of individuals to the highest political glory that exacts attention to the common good, the glory of founding new orders. In the widest sense, these new orders must be understood as "sects," for politics, culture, and religion are connected, and the glorious prince makes everything anew. The "new orders" of *The Prince* and the *Discourses* appear in the *Florentine Histories* as "sects." The disease of modern politics, then, can be summarized as the inability of the princely party to control the making of sects. Sects cannot be made or maintained by being remade because the Christian sect controls the popular party. The remaining natural party, since it cannot make the conventional, must confront the supernatural. In this conspiratorial work Machiavelli tries to show Italian princes how to regain control of the supernatural.

116. *F. H.* 2:12 (beg.) makes it clear that the modern parties are not the natural parties.

117. *F. H.* 4:7 offers an excellent example of this predicament. After a Florentine defeat, Rinaldo has to defend the party of disarmed nobles against the popular view that God justly willed their defeat to diminish their power. His advice is to consider God's will as fortune, to show fortune a bold face, to imitate their fathers, and not to lose their spirit (*animo*) against "any prince whatever." In effect, unknowingly and unsuccessfully, he advises the people to abandon Christianity.